

Amendments to the Claims:

Please cancel claim 56, amend claims 55, 57, 69, 85 and 88 as follows:

Listing of Claims:

1-54. (Cancelled)

55. (Amended) A method of manufacturing a polishing pad for planarization of a microelectronic-device substrate assembly, comprising:

depositing a plurality of pattern elements over a first surface of a polymeric backing member, each pattern element having a portion projecting away from the first surface of the backing member;

forming a plurality of contour surfaces over a first surface of a polymeric backing member to project away from the first surface, the portions of the pattern elements projecting away from the backing member defining the contour surfaces; and

covering the contour surfaces with a cover layer of a hard inorganic material that retains the pattern elements on the backing member and conforms to the contour surfaces to form nodules from the portions of the hard cover layer over the contour surfaces, the nodules projecting away from the first surface of the backing member.

56. (Cancelled)

57. (Amended) The method of claim [56] 55 wherein depositing a plurality of pattern elements over the first surface comprises coating the first surface with a liquid containing the pattern elements and evaporating the liquid to leave the pattern elements directly on the first surface of the backing member.

58. (Cancelled)

59. (Original) The method of claim 57 wherein coating the first surface with the liquid containing the pattern elements comprises spraying the first surface of the backing member with a solution including the liquid and the pattern elements.

60-68. (Cancelled)

69. (Amended) A method of manufacturing a polishing pad for planarization of a microelectronic-device substrate assembly, comprising:

distributing a plurality of pattern elements over a first surface of a polymeric backing member, the pattern elements defining a plurality of contour surfaces projecting away from the first surface of the backing member; and

forming a layer of a hard inorganic material at least on the pattern elements to conform to the contour surfaces, the layer of hard inorganic material retaining the pattern elements on the polymeric backing member, and the portions of the cover layer over the contour surfaces projecting away from the first surface of the backing member to define abrasive nodules.

70. (Original) The method of claim 69 wherein distributing a plurality of pattern elements over the first surface comprises coating the first surface with a liquid containing the pattern elements and evaporating the liquid to leave the pattern elements directly on the first surface of the backing member.

71. (Cancelled)

72. (Original) The method of claim 70 wherein coating the first surface with the liquid containing the pattern elements comprises spraying the first surface of the backing member with a solution including the liquid and the pattern elements.

73-79. (Cancelled)

80. (Withdrawn) A method of planarizing a microelectronic-device substrate assembly, comprising:

pressing a surface of the substrate assembly against a polishing pad including a backing member having a first surface and a second surface, a plurality of pattern elements distributed over the first surface of the backing member to define a plurality of contour surfaces projecting away from the first surface of the backing member, and a hard cover layer over the pattern elements and over portions of the first surface of the backing member exposed between pattern elements, the cover layer at least substantially conforming to the contour surfaces of the pattern elements to form a plurality of hard nodules projecting away from the first surface of the backing member, the nodules defining at least a portion of a planarizing surface of the polishing pad for engaging a microelectronic-device substrate assembly held by a substrate holder; and

moving at least one of the substrate assembly or the polishing pad to translate the surface of the substrate assembly across at least a portion of the hard nodules.

81. (Withdrawn) A method of planarizing a microelectronic-device substrate assembly, comprising:

pressing a surface of the substrate assembly against a polishing pad including a base section having a first surface, a plurality of contour surfaces above the first surface, and a second surface configured to be placed over a support table of a planarizing machine, and the polishing pad further including a plurality of abrasive elements projecting away from the base section to define at least a portion of a planarizing surface for engaging a microelectronic-device substrate assembly held by a substrate holder, the abrasive elements including raised portions of a hard cover layer over the contour surfaces that project away from the base section; and

moving at least one of the substrate assembly or the polishing pad to translate the surface of the substrate assembly across at least a portion of the abrasive elements.

82. (Withdrawn) A polishing pad manufactured according to a method comprising:

forming a plurality of contour surfaces over a first surface of a backing member to project away from the first surface; and

covering the contour surfaces with a cover layer of hard material that at least substantially conforms to the contour surfaces and to portions of the first surface of the backing member exposed between pattern elements to form nodules from the portions of the hard cover layer over the contour surfaces, the nodules projecting away from the first surface of the backing member.

83. (Withdrawn) A polishing pad manufactured according to a method, comprising:

distributing a plurality of pattern elements over a first surface of a backing member, the pattern elements defining a plurality of contour surfaces projecting away from the first surface of the backing member; and

forming a layer of a hard material on at least the pattern elements to at least substantially conform to the contour surfaces, the portions of the cover layer over the contour surfaces projecting away from the first surface of the backing member to define abrasive nodules.

84. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55, wherein forming a plurality of contour surfaces over a first surface of a polymeric backing member includes forming the plurality contour surfaces on a compressible polymeric backing member.

85. (Amended) The method of claim 55, wherein forming a plurality of contour surfaces over a first surface of a polymeric backing member includes forming the plurality contour surfaces on [an] a generally incompressible polymeric backing member comprised of a cured resin.

86. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 55, wherein forming a plurality of contour surfaces over a first surface of a polymeric backing member includes forming the plurality contour surfaces on a backing member comprised of a cured resin.

87. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 69, wherein distributing a plurality of pattern elements over a first surface of a polymeric backing member includes distributing the plurality of pattern elements on a compressible polymeric backing member.

88. (Amended) The method of claim 69, wherein distributing a plurality of pattern elements over a first surface of a polymeric backing member includes distributing the plurality of pattern elements on [an] a generally incompressible polymeric backing member comprised of a cured resin.

89. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 69, wherein distributing a plurality of pattern elements over a first surface of a polymeric backing member includes distributing the plurality of pattern elements on a backing member comprised of a cured resin.